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**INFORMATION NEEDS OF CASSAVA FARMERS IN OKPOKWU
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA.**

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ABSTRACT

This Research work was designed to investigate the information needs of Cassava Farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State. The Study adopted a survey research design. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study, the study identified the information needs of Cassava Farmers, the sources available the them, the kinds of information, Cassava Farmers use to improve their yield, the means/sources Cassava Farmers use to get their information, problems of information dissemination to Cassava farmers and strategies to overcome problems. The study therefore recommended that the local government should be sending Agricultural Extension Workers to educate the rural farmers on agricultural matters; the local government should equally organize adult education programme for the rural farmers as this will enhance their information utilization capacity and community outreach programmes should equally be organized and used to disseminate information that would aid the socio-economic, political, agricultural and general enlightenment of the rural farmers.

KEYWORDS: information, information needs, cassava farmers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Okpokwu Local Government Area is one of the twenty-three local government areas in Benue State. The inhabitants of the local government area are predominantly farmers, petty traders, artisans, Civil Servant particularly those at the local government administrative level and a few from state and federal government parastatals. The crops produced in the local government area include, Yam, Rice, Beans, Soya beans, Guinea corn, Maize, Groundnut and Cassava.

Cassava (*Manihot esculenta crantz*) belong to the family Euphorbia cease. Cassava is one of the most important staple food crops grown in tropical Africa. This is partly due to its efficient production of food energy, year-round availability, tolerance to extreme weather conditions and its suitability for farming and food system in Africa. The increasing demand in overseas and domestic markets for cassava has also attracted a considerable number of farmers interest in producing cassava (Omeregbee & Banneke, 2004).

End-use markets for cassava are rapidly expanding. Real opportunities for a boom in the production and processing of cassava roots into cassava chips, edible cassava flour (Lafun), composite flour, cassava starch and garri for international markets exist. The diversification and expansion of cassava development into new growth markets have attracted considerable research interests of governmental and non-governmental organizations. Within the agricultural sector, cassava has remained the major crop cultivated by Nigerian farmers. In view of its wide cultivation, and the potential

Benefits derivable from cassava, the presidential cassava initiative was introduced in 2002. The primary objective(s) of the presidential initiative on cassava was to expand primary processing and utilization to absorb the national cassava production glut among others (Osagie, et al. 2002). Furthermore, the combined efforts of National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) and International Institute of Tropical Agricultural (IITA) have led to: The release of 22 improved cassava varieties to Nigerian farmers; Development of appropriate agronomic practices for cassava cultivation which included appropriate plant spacing in sole and in intercropping, the use of appropriate stem cutting as planting materials, appropriate fertilizer regimes and weed management; Integrated and control of cassava mealy bugs and green mites; Development of cultivar control measures for pests and diseases of cassava such as termites, cassava green mites and cassava mosaic disease (CMD) (Nweke, et al. 2002).

The IITA since 2002 has made significant inputs into the Nigerian presidential initiative on cassava. There are currently three cassava projects implemented through the IITA in Nigeria.

However, Cassava is the crop that is produced in large quantity, although some farmers cultivate cassava on subsistence bases, majority produce on commercial scale in order to improve their economic and social basis. Cassava is a viable crop in Okpokwu and Benue State at large because cassava based products constitute a staple food for the people. This is used in the production of Cassava flour, animal feeds, garri, Akpu and even non consumable products like Starch and adhesive liquids.

Cassava farmers need information to improve on their production. In order to get high yield and bumper harvest as well as become economically and socially viable, they

need various types of information on different areas that will help them improve their farming skills, technique, inputs, process, marketing as well as distribution strategies.

It is equally important to adequately educate Cassava farmers on how to get tractors to plough and till the land for large scale farming. Information on how to acquire variety of Cassava is equally important. Other information is on the suitability of soil for cassava farming or cultivation period suitable for cultivation of cassava, irrigation techniques as well as pest control mechanism are all very crucial to the cassava farmers.

Agricultural information dissemination is crucial to the productivity of farmers and makes them learn about those things which they are not aware of (Banmeke and Olowu, 2005). However, different categories of household and individual have different information needs, and their current expressed need for and potential access to information sources may also be different. Different people have different levels of access to the individuals and institutions which mediate these flows of information. If we can identify those to which people have most access or regard as the most reliable, external agencies can use them as channels for getting new agricultural information into the communities or to specific categories of people and obtaining feedback information needs. Farmers need training in technical knowledge if their productivity is to be enhanced. The transformation of traditional or peasant agriculture of farmers must of necessity emphasize the training and education of rural farmers.

In all forms of human endeavors, effective communication goes a long way in making an individual, group of people and the society to become more informed, more educated and more aware of issues, roles and responsibilities around them. Good information shapes the attitude of people in a society as well as their perceptions and methods of doing things.

According to Folorunsho, as cited in Umen (2009), a well-informed society is a mobilized society because it is information literate, more responsive to government policies and eager to participate in the nation's development programmes, these programmes could be technological, political and agricultural etc.

In the field of agriculture, the role of information in enhancing agricultural development cannot be underestimated; information is a veritable tool in the production, marketing and distribution of agricultural produce particularly in Nigeria where majority

of the farmers are uneducated and as such face paucity of information on how to develop their agricultural production.

Opara (2008) posited that knowledge and information are basic ingredient to increased agricultural production. According to the author the relevance of good information and the availability of fertilizer, cost and implication become inevitable in the operation and management of agricultural enterprise.

Therefore, an individual, group of people or society to attain greatness through agriculture, they need adequate information on how to acquire facilities for the conservation and preservation of their produce locally, information on farm inputs like fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide, etc. information on farm technique as well as the right forms, sources and places to get the needed information. It is in the light of the above that Opara (2008) holds that information needs of the farmers and the best form and methods to provide them the information they need.

It is against this background that this study set out to investigate information needs of Cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area are producer of the crop in large quantity, but it has been observed that they are not adequately or properly informed about agricultural innovation and programmes that could improve their productivity or yield.

The crude method of cultivating cassava applied by farmers in the local government suggests that they are out of time with information on how to apply innovations methods of the production of cassava to achieve productivity and enhance their standard of living.

It has been observed that cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area needs the following information to improve their yields, they need various types of information on different areas that will help them improve on their farming system such as; information on how to conserve and preserve the product locally, information on agro-chemicals such as herbicides and pesticides, information on diseases and pests control, how to control erosion, information on how to control irrigation, information on farm inputs etc. to mention but a few.

In an attempt to provide information delivery services to farmers, the federal, state and local governments have over the year formulated policies, constituted implementation committee, initiates projects as well as established institutions all in a bid to sensitize farmers on agricultural

innovations and provide the necessary farm inputs. All these efforts are aimed at equipping the farmers materially and information wise so as to make them viable. In spite of these efforts, cassava farmers in Okpokwu local government Area have the difficulty to accessing adequate information they need to make them attain self-sufficiency in cassava production.

The problem of this research therefore, is to identify the information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area and to establish ways of meeting these information needs so that cassava farmers in the area can be adequately informed towards enhancing productivity and ensuring their economic and social viability.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.

The specific purposes are:

1. To investigate the information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.
2. To investigate the sources of information available to cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.
3. To determine the kinds of information cassava farmers need to improve their yields in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.
4. To investigate the means/sources farmers use to get their information in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State?
2. What are the sources of information available to cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State?
3. What are the kinds of information do cassava farmers needs to improve their yield in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State?
4. What are the means/ways by which cassava farmers use to get their information in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is expected that this study could be beneficial to different group such as; Farmers, Traders and Government.

To Farmers, it is expected that they will benefit in ways like; acquiring loan from government, marketing their products, getting the right traders to buy their goods.

To government, it is expected that the government will benefit in areas like; they will be informed of information needs of cassava farmers, provide extension services and agricultural programmes to enhance their economic base.

To traders, it is expected that they will benefit in areas such as; getting the right products, knowing the right market to take the product to marketing of the products whether locally or internationally.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is anchored on information needs of cassava farmers. In the same vein, this study is restricted to Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.

1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINATION OF TERMS

Information: is a strategic resource (financial, materials or plant resource) needed by any person (farmers) as a factor of production. It is also needed for problem-solving, current awareness and recreational purposes.

Information Needs: Are the information that farmers require to improve on their products.

Cassava farmers: are the people who cultivate cassava for subsistence living as well as those who cultivate for commercials purposes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter, a literature review is concerned mainly with identifying and reviewing the literature, which is relevant to the focus of the study.

2.2 CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The section of the study seeks to explain some of the concepts that the study consider relevant.

2.2.1 Concept of Information.

2.2.2 Information Needs.

2.2.3 Sources of disseminating Information.

2.2.4 Types of Information Farmers Need to Improve their Yield.

2.2.5 Means/Methods of Disseminating Information.

2.2.1 CONCEPT OF INFORMATION

This concept of information is viewed as a basic resource used by people to improve their condition of living and is essential for development process. Aluko (1997), observed that the status and power of a nation by the 21st Century will be partly determined by the information at its disposal and recognition of the importance of information to the development of societies, information is important and useful to everyone in the society. Be they farmers, government officials or businessman because information is a vital resource to development in our fast growing world. It lifts an individual from a state of ignorance, illiteracy and poverty to a state of enlightenment, prosperity and literacy. Onongbo (2005) states that a competitive economy depends on the free flow of information, good decision-making depend on reliable and timely information, information is central to the teaching and learning process and reduces or eliminate uncertainty. Its absence means policy mistakes, educational disparity, slower productivity growth. It affects the quality and quantity, success and effectiveness of public policy.

In fact, information is essential to survival, it provides individuals, societies and nations with a second chance for discovering human condition, information is an asset and a resource for development of government agencies and the targeted population

(Kamba, 2009). Information has received a wide spread acceptance as the essential feature of production, consumption and exchange in this modern era (Opeke, 2004). This means source of wealth and power is increasingly as compared to physical resources.

Kumar (2010) opine that determining the need of the users' means knowing about their requirements for information. In order to determine their requirements, it is essential to knowing the following; that they are their back group (qualification; mastery of language area of research and specialization) and the purpose they need the information for.

According to Laloo (2002), needs means what a person ought to have, circumstance under which something is lacking, that which one cannot do without and that which is necessary for an organization's health and wellbeing. He further said that "information need" is a difficult concept to define, to isolate and especially to measure, it involves a cognitive process which may operate on different levels of consciousness and hence may not be clear even to inquire himself. Information needs can therefore be better understood if the concept of need is defined.

Aninweze (2004) has also highlighted much on need. To him, need represent an imbalance or lack of adjustment between the present condition or situation or status-quo and a new changed set of condition assumed to be more desirable. More especially, need may be looked at as the difference between what is and what ought to be hence always implying a gap between these two conditions. Aboyede (1987) made it clear that information need relate first to the main characteristic of the people what they are and what is important to them. The needs reflect the sociocultural, political and economic dimension of their development and aspiration. The above statement implies that individuals differs and so also does thick approach to issues. The approach people use in tackling assigned task or issues vary depending on who is involved.

2.2.2 INFORMATION NEED

Cassava farmers need agricultural information to improve their farming practices and there information needs may range from the use of fertilizer, pest and disease control, higher yield/agricultural production (Cassava), planning at the right time, weed control, improved seed, post-harvest, loss/preservation, agricultural credits, agricultural

cooperation, etc. the researcher further observed that cassava farmer needs agricultural information to enhance or boost their productivity and also be informed of modern farming system in order to meet up with challenges that may arise in their occupation.

Over the years, deliberate though ineffective efforts have been made by donors and African countries to bring about agricultural development without much to show for it (Ozowa, 1997) much of the failure can be attributed to the adapted transformation approach to agriculture which is characterized by the introduction of mere variety of large scale farming technology (Ozowa,1997).

According to Agwu (2000), it is however gratifying to note that there is now a shift in emphasis from the big scale improvement strategies approach which is attuned to African age-long farm practices. The failure according to Ozowa (1997) can also be attributed to the treatment of information delivery as a matter of course by most African government. As often happened, he adds, agricultural information is not integrated with other development programmes to address numerous related problems that face farmers and cassava farmers.

Equlo and Ajibegun (2002) observed that information is essential ingredient in agricultural development programmes but Nigeria farmer do not feel the impact of agricultural innovations either because they have no access to such vital information or is exclusively focused on policy makers, researcher and those who manage policy decision with scanty attention paid to the information need of the targeted beneficiaries of the policy decision. They also add that the non-provision of cassava farming/ agricultural information is the key factor that has greatly limited agricultural development in Nigeria and Benue State in particular. Anyanmu, Agwu and Umewain (2002) are of the opinion that if approaches to agricultural development programmes are to work, African government need to take new approaches to information dissemination and management that grow out from a clear understanding of what farmers and cassava farmers information needs are.

Today, agricultural information on cassava farming has assumed greater importance because of the link between the provision of cassava farming information and increased and sustained cassava productivity (Ekoja, 2004). While Ozowa (1998) observed that no one can categorically claim to know all the information needs of farmers

especially in an information dependent sector like agriculture where there are new and rather complex problems facing cassava farmers every day.

Agricultural information according to Otuaku (2008), is all published knowledge in all aspect of agriculture and the quality of such information depend on three attributes which are accuracy, timeliness and relevance. Access to adequate information is very essential to increase cassava productivity. While Daniel (2008) is of the view that agriculture information are operationally, the various set of information and message that are relevant to farming activities of farmers such as crop production and protection, animal production and management and natural resource production and conservation.

Similarly, Samuel (2001) defines agricultural information as the data for decision making and as a resource that must be acquired and used in order to make an informed decision. Umali (1994) classified agricultural information into two broad groups: pure agriculture information and agricultural information inherently tied to new inventions. Pure agricultural information refers to any information which can be used without the acquisition of a specific physical technology. On the other hand, agricultural innovations or technologies are those that come in form of agricultural inputs, management technologies facilitating farm management and marketing and processing equipment.

More so, small scale farmers also require information. Munyua (2003) assert that small scale farmers require information on supply of inputs, new technologies, early warning system (for drought, pest and disease) credit, market, prices and their competitors. Ozowa (1995) identified the types of information that farmers (cassava Farmers) needs. These are information on production technologies, credit and marketing, production technology. To him, encompasses improved variety of inputs, modern farming implement, fertilizer, agro-chemical, weeding and harvesting. Ozowa, further stated that cassava farmers need to be provided information on sources such as loans, location of the lending institutions, interest rates, and amount of credit available and mode of payment, provision of marketing information would enable the farmers make rational and relevant decisions. These information needs of cassava farmers may be grouped into five heading:

- Agricultural inputs
- Extension education

- Agricultural technology
- Agricultural credit
- Marketing

Modern farm inputs are needed to raise small farm productivity. These inputs may include fertilizer, improved variety of seeds and seedlings, fees, plant protection, chemicals, agricultural machinery and equipment and water (Ozowa, 1995). In another development, Swanson (n.d) identified two main categories of agricultural technology and knowledge base technology. To him in material technology knowledge is embodied in technological products such as tools, equipment's, agro-chemicals and plant varieties or hybrids. On the other hand knowledge based technology embodied technical knowledge management skills and other processes that farmer need to successfully grow a crop or produce an animal product.

2.2.3 SOURCES OF DISSMINATING INFORMATION TO CASSAVA FARMERS

The worth of agricultural information lies in the application. The effective communication of information to the ultimate end users is just as important as the information itself, in providing information to cassava farmers, information officers and Librarian must come up with client-centered information services that can meet the needs of cassava farmers in terms of both the content of the information and channels by which it is communicated (Ekoja, 2002). He also noted that all cassava farmer require a lot of information in order to develop successful practices, information managers i.e. those in extension services, Librarian and information officers must know the kind of information packages and communication channels that farmers prefers in order to communicate the desire information to them effectively.

A number of channels exist in communicating to cassava farmers. According to Abraham (2009), there are several channels and sources used to bring information to audience, such as functions, town-criers but in the traditional African society or setting where most residence are illiterate the mode of information to such categories of people is through “town-criers”

While Zaniku (1991), in his study found that the sources of agricultural information most often used by farmers is personal experience (74.7%). This second and

third most often used source of agricultural information are friends/relative/neighbor, television (85.9%) and the radio (20.9%).

In the rural communities in African, Odini (1990) in his study identified the fact that oral communication from neighbours tends to be the primary source of information due to a shortage of more standard organized information services. In addition to this Ofuoku (2008) said sources of information among cassava farmer are other farmers, farmers group, extension agents, research institutes, Universities and NGOs. Radio is one of the fastest, most powerful channels and in many countries has been used in communicating farm information to cassava farmers. Radio reaches people at all levels that understand the languages of transmission. The use of radio as mass communication tool for agricultural development has long been recognized. Radio has been used as a tool for learning and community address system:

Berech (2002), supported these in remote regions without telephone, people use radio to announce meetings, funerals, wedding, and people learn about their government programmes and plans on radio and hear about events and issues in their communities. They also used their local or community radio stations to voice their own views. Television adds a second dimension to radio broadcasting. Thus, increasing the range of methods available to extension workers; the agricultural extension agent can present a whole series of result demonstrations through pictures. Thus emphasizing differences overtime. Cassava farmers obtain information daily from radio, television and neighbor's and less often (weekly/monthly) from newspapers, poster, exhibits, visual aids and leaflets and extension agents. Conservently, extension agencies and related organization should ensure that more information is disseminated through these channels to cassava farmers.

2.2.4 TYPES OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION TO CASSAVA FARMERS

Agriculture is a major sector of Nigeria economy as it provides food and processed product for the populace as well as the provision of raw materials for agro-allied industries (Ayoade, 2010). One of the ways of achieving the role of the agricultural sector in Nigeria economy is through effectiveness of information sources on improved farm practices including fertilizer application (Abbas, 2003). According to Ayoade

(2010), agricultural information can be viewed as a process of communicating ideas, skills and technology from extension to farmers. The importance of such information as an ingredient for advancement of agriculture cannot be over emphasized as its inadequacy could be dangerous and turn to become a major constraint to agricultural development (Adeola, 2008). The high output of agricultural research has led to a large pool of the technologies which are yet to be disseminated to farmer (Ayoade, 2010). This view is supported by Abbas (2003) that most of the recommended agricultural practices resulting in low yield per acre.

Research has shown that farmer's information exposure is most likely to be an important factor influencing their adoption behavior as greater exposure is likely to enhance awareness about the latest recommendation and leads farmers putting their recommendations into practices in a precise manner (Muhammed & Garfortu, 1995).

Fertilizer according to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2010), is any organic or inorganic materials of natural or synthetic origin (other than liming materials) that is added to a soil to supply one or more plant nutrients essential to the growth of plants. A recent assessment by FAO found that 40 to 60% of crops yield are attributable to commercial fertilizer use. Fertilizer has been known to improve biodiversity (soil life) and long term productivity of soil and may prove a large depository for excess carbon dioxide (Renwick: 2010). As a result of the benefit farmers get from fertilizer, it becomes imperative that information sources on fertilizer must be effective for any appreciable increase in crop production.

In this dynamic world, the rural people's information requirement is increasing constantly, agricultural knowledge is changing rapidly; it is obvious that the development of agriculture is highly dependent on the new knowledge and information.

According to FAO (2002), rural communities need a wide variety of agricultural information such as availabilities of agricultural support services, government regulation, crop production and management disease outbreak, adaptation, of technologies by other farmers, wages rates, fertilizer availability and applications and so on. The content of the information services needs to reflect their diverse circumstances and livelihoods. Therefore, information can be seen as the basic element in any development activity and

it must be available and accessible to all farmers in order to bring the desired development.

The rural people also need information on multiplicity of issues that border around; agricultural related information like supply of fertilizer, supply of other farm inputs, modern methods of farming, income generation, good roads, health information etc.

According to Visakwu (2002), information dissemination to farmers may be divided into six groups;

Field acquisition: farmers are required to know the different types of schemes, subsidies purchasing of agricultural land.

Agricultural inputs: Farmers need information about improved variety of seeds, pesticides, agricultural equipment, weather conditions, harvest and post-harvest technology.

Agricultural technology: cassava farmers should be fed with their farming information about innovation technology in their farming.

Agricultural marketing: day-to-day market trend on price of different variety of crops are necessary for the farmers.

Food technology: post-harvest food technology information is needed by cassava farmers to get optimum benefit out of their crop.

The contribution of agricultural information is not limited to surplus food production areas. Small scale farmers in marginal areas, also require knowledge and information for better achievement of household, food security and consequently national food security. Moreover, according to FAO (1992), improved household, food security requires good decision making by rural men and women, for which better grassroots information availability is imperative.

2.2.5 MEANS/WAYS OF DISSEMINATIONG INFORMAMTION TO CASSAVA FARMERS

Farmers need information for their day-to-day farming work for enhancement of productivity and these information needs to be well package in a way that will make great impact in them. In packaging the information the language of communication need to be

properly addressed bearing in mind that most of the farmers are not learned. The researcher observed that most of the farmers embrace educative programmes that are being broadcast in their local language compare to the English language because of inability to understand or comprehend the message. Effective access to accurate and comprehensive information enhanced agricultural or farming practices (Andre, 1996). This statement agreed with the researcher view of well packaging information for achieving it goals. Agricultural information is very important to farmers of all categories. Aina (1990) averred that farmers need agricultural information because it has assumed greater importance because of the link between the provisions of agricultural information and increased sustained agricultural productivity.

Agricultural information practitioners have equally accepted the need for and need efforts to improve transfer in this sector by building links that will be between those who generate information and those need it. This links ensures sustainable agricultural production which according to the International Agricultural Centre and Royal Tropical Institute (1998) holds the key to food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable management of natural resources.

One of the agencies or services put in place to diffuse agricultural information is the agricultural extension service. Agricultural extension as a service meant to educate the farmers and encourage them to adopt new techniques. The work of the extension service revolves around information diffusion because information communication is the process through which innovation, knowledge etc. meant for agriculture are passed on from researchers, policy makers etc. to the front line people or farmers (Ekoja, 2002). The common meaning made out for extension service is that it involves the conscious use of communication of information.

This information can be disseminated to the rural farmers(Cassava farmers) through the following mediums; Farm broadcast, extension publication, training, extension advisory services demonstration and exhibitions including those mounted at agricultural show, farmers field days.

Rural farmers also gets information through friends, neighbours, seminars organize by local government agricultural units interaction with relatives, from personal experiences, community meeting and market places etc.

2.3 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

This section is concerned with the empirical studies done in the area of information needs of cassava farmers. A numbers of studies have been conducted by different people and organization on the adoption of different agricultural technologies both within and outside Nigeria. On the other hand, there is limited of empirical studies related to the factors influencing access to and utilization of agricultural information.

Ekoja (2004) carried out a study on sensitizing users for increased information use: the case of Nigeria farmers. The aim was to find out how much Nigerian farmers know about and access the NAERLS information services and how much their desire for increased information use as evidenced in their articulated information needs. The researcher design used for this study was the descriptive survey: the population comprised the NAERLS and Nigerian farmers (including cassava farmers, fishermen, livestock farmers and agro-foresters) found in and around the Zonal headquarters. A sample of 100 cassava farmers was studied in each zone, making a total of 500. The researcher instruments for data collection were questionnaires and documentary sources and both were complemented by interviews. The findings of the research are that little known and access information services were television programmes. English language radio programmes and most extension publications.

As a result, most cassava farmers have great desire for agricultural information which is attested to by the findings relating to their information needs in this study because it is all about farmers and cassava farmers. The difference between this and the current study is that it is limited on sensitizing users for increased information use in Nigeria in general whereas the present concerns itself with information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.

In another development, Opara (2008) carried out a study on agricultural information provision to cassava farmers. The adopted ex-post facto research design based on a survey agricultural development programmes zones of Imo state. A total of 1386 farmers formed the sample population for the study stratified proportionate sampling techniques used to select sample of the study. The methods of data collection were questionnaire as interview schedule or non-self-administered questionnaire in

situations where farmers could not read and write in English. The data collected was analyzed using frequency table and percentages. In the study, it was found that their information needs were marketing and processing cooperative is attributed to small-scale level of farming operations. Credit facilities, improved crop varieties, agro-chemical, agro-machinery, inputs and implement and how to access them and provision and environmental policy and law in another area of information deprivation to the farmers. The work of Opara is also related to the current study because it dealt with cassava farmers. The difference that exists between the former and the present is that Opara's work was on agricultural information provision for farmers while the present study is on information need of cassava farmers. The former employed ex-post facto research design. The present will adopt descriptive survey research design. Again, while the present will adopt purposive sampling technique to select sample, the former adopted stratified proportional sampling technique to select the sample of the study and different instruments, with the former study was also conducted in a different state (Imo) and in different agricultural programme zones.

2.4 SUMMARY OF THE REVIEWS

The chapter reviews relevant literature that encapsulates the focus of this study. It discusses the concepts that relate to information needs and information seeking behavior of cassava farmers. The review further highlighted the types of information needs of farmers (Cassava farmers). The empirical studies considered under the review provided related in-sights into the possible actions to take in solving the problems of information needs of cassava farmers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter describes the research design area of study, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation, validation of instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The method that was used to carry out this study is the survey research method. This method is used because it allows the investigator to gather information about the targeted population without a complete enumeration. It also help to save the researcher's time and money.

3.3 AREA OF THE STUDY

This study covered information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State. The local government is located in the North-western part of Benue State and it is one among the twenty three (23) Local Government in Benue State.

3.4 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

This population of the study comprises all the cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State which by implication are all registered cassava farmers with BARNADA office in Okpokwu Local Government Area totaling 2,842 (BARNADA, 2018).

3.5 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The simple random sampling technique was used in choosing the respondents for the study ten percent (10%) of the registered cassava farmers were selected to form the sample population for the study. The decision to choose ten percent was borne out of the fact that Sole, Aramide and Gbotoso (2010) maintained that in a large population like this ten percent should be used in determining the sample. Thus a total of 284 cassava farmers

were selected for the study in order to make generalization about the responses of the whole population on the study without making complete enumeration.

3.6 INSTRUMENTATION

Questionnaire was used to collect relevant data for the study. The questionnaire was titled “Information Needs of Cassava Farmers” (INCF), identification of cassava farmers’ questionnaire which was designed to elicit information from the respondents. Questionnaire was used because of its effectiveness in data collection. The questionnaire was structured with optional answers from which respondents were expected to make their choices by ticking (√) in the boxes as appropriate to them. The questionnaire was made of sections based on the purpose and research questions or variables measured by the research work as follows:

Section A: information needs of cassava farmers comprised of ten (10) items.

Section B: Sources of information available to cassava farmers, this also comprises of ten (10) items.

Section C: kinds of information needed to improve yield, comprises of seven (7) items.

Section D: Means/ways of getting information comprises of seven (7) items.

3.7 VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT

The instrument for data collection in this study was subjected to face validity by two experts who are lecturers in the Department of Library Science and Information Technology, Gboko Polytechnic, Gboko, Benue State to validate. Necessary corrections were effected on the items before they were administered to the respondents.

3.8 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents (Cassava Farmers). Instruction on how to complete the questionnaire was provided and the researcher collect back the questionnaire immediately after completion.

3.9 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to generate frequencies and percentages in order to answer the research questions formulated for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings and was presented in table. The responses were tabulated using frequency table and then treated by computing the weighted mean for each item in the questionnaire on a 4-point likert scale. To arrive at a decision, the mean response for each item was computed and results compared with the criterion. Mean of 2.50 and where it was either equal or greater than the item was accepted and where it was less than the item was rejected.

4.2 RESPONSE RATE

Table 4.1: Response Rate

RESPONSE GROUP	NO. OF QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED	NO. OF USEABLE RETURN	PERCENTAGE USEABLE RETURN
CASSAVA FARMERS	284	270	95.1%

Source: Field Survey, 2018:

The above table indicated that 284 copies of questionnaire were administered to cassava farmers and 270 copies were returned and found useable representing 95.1%.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE:

What are the information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area?

Research question one was introduced to determine the information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area and the data in Table 4.2.2 was used in answering this research question.

INFORMATION NEEDS OF CASSAVA FARMERS

TABLE 4.2.2 INFORMATION NEEDS OF CASSAVA FARMERS

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	DA	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1	Improve species	120	70	50	30	270	3.04	Accept
2	Insecticide/pesticide	90	100	80	50	270	2.85	Accept
3.	Weed control	90	70	60	50	270	2.74	Accept
4.	Marketing strategies	30	50	90	100	270	2.04	Accept
5.	Storage/preservation facilities	85	96	39	50	270	2.8	Accept
6.	Farming equipment	130	60	60	20	270	3.11	Accept
7.	Weather condition	40	70	60	100	270	2.19	Reject
8.	Technological innovation	51	69	63	87	270	2.31	Reject
9.	Credit facilities	92	88	31	59	270	2.79	Accept
10.	Postharvest food technology	74	66	82	48	270	2.61	accept

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The above table shows mean of the response to information needs of cassava farmers from the table cassava farmers accept that they need information on farming equipment with mean score of 3.11, improve species with means score of 3.04, insecticide/pesticide with means score of 2.85, storage /presentation facilities with mean score of 2.79, weed control and postharvest food technology with mean scores of 2.74 and 2.61 respectively. However, Cassava Farmers reject that they don't need information on technology innovation with mean score of 2.31, weather condition and market strategies with mean scores of 2.19 and 2.04 respectively. This is because of lack of awareness about the importance of weather condition, technological innovation and market strategies.

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

What are the sources of information available to cassava farmers in Okpokwo Local Government Area of Benue State?

Research question 2 was introduced to determine the sources of information available to cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area and the data in table 4.2.3 are used in answering the research question.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO CASSAVA FARMER

Table 4.2.3: sources of information available to cassava farmers.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	DA	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Newspaper/magazine	41	79	90	60	270	2.38	Reject
2.	Bill boards/poster	54	71	65	80	270	2.36	Reject
3.	Public Libraries	80	30	70	90	270	2.37	Reject
4.	Radio	120	70	30	50	270	2.96	Accept
5.	Television	69	51	87	63	270	2.47	Reject
6.	Traditional Town Crier	60	130	20	60	270	2.70	Accept
7.	Agricultural extension workers	92	88	59	31	270	2.89	Accept
8.	Friends, relative/ neighbor's	96	85	40	49	270	2.84	Accept
9.	Peer group meeting	100	90	70	40	270	3.15	Accept
10.	Opinion/political leaders.	60	20	100	90	270	2.19	Reject

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The above table shows mean of the response to source of information available to cassava farmers. From the table cassava farmers accepts that the source of information available to them include peer group meetings with mean score of 3.15, radio with mean score of 2.89, and friends/relatives/ neighbours with mean score of 2.84. However, they rejected the availability of newspapers/magazine, with mean score of 2.38, public libraries with mean score of 2.37, television with mean score of 2.47, billboards/posters with mean score of 2.19. The study revealed that library was not known or cited as a source of information by cassava farmers. This shows that libraries, in spite of previous studies and attempts to improve their services, are yet to make appreciable development

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

What are the kinds of information do cassava famers need to improve their yield in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State?

Research question 3 was introduced to determine the kind of information cassava farmers need to improve their yield, and the data in table 4.2.4 are used in answering this research question.

KINDS OF INFORMATION NEEDED BY CASSAVA FARMERS TO IMPROVE YIELD

Table 4.2.4: Kinds of information needed by cassava farmers to improve yield

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	DA	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Information on fertilizer availability and application	90	100	60	50	270	3.07	Accept
2.	Information on new farming techniques	87	93	31	59	270	2.77	Accept
3.	Information on disease and pest control	85	96	49	40	270	2.84	Accept
4.	Information on agricultural support services	69	51	63	87	270	2.38	Reject
5.	Information on government regulation	71	54	80	65	270	2.49	Reject
6.	Information on supply of inputs	120	70	60	20	270	3.09	Accept
7.	Information on income generation	79	41	70	50	270	2.33	Reject

Source: Field survey, 2018

The above table shows mean of response to kinds of information needed by the cassava farmers to improve their yields. From the table cassava farmers accept that the kinds of information they need to improve their yield are: information on fertilizer availability and application with mean score of 3.07, information on disease and pest control with mean score of 2.84 and information on new farming technique with mean score of 2.77. However, the cassava farmers rejected that they do not need information on government regulation, agricultural support services and income generation with mean scores of 2.49, 2.38 and 2.33 respectively. This implies that the Cassava Farmers embarked on subsistence farming that is why they do not require information in income generation and agricultural support services.

WHAT ARE THE MEANS/SOURCE BY WHICH CASSAVA FARMERS USE TO GET THEIR INFORMATION IN OKPOKWU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE?

Research question 4 was introduced to investigate their information and the data in table 4.2.5 was used in answering this research question.

MEANS/SOURCES OF GETTING INFORMATION BY CASSAVA FARMERS

Table 4.2.5: Means/sources of getting information by Cassava Farmers.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	DA	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Farm broadcast	71	54	65	80	270	2.43	Reject
2.	Extension advisory service	96	85	40	49	270	2.84	Accept
3.	Extension publication	93	87	41	49	270	2.83	Accept
4.	Agricultural demonstration	80	30	70	90	270	2.37	Reject
5.	Agricultural shows	92	86	59	31	270	2.87	Accept
6.	Seminars organize	41	79	90	60	270	2.37	Reject
7.	Market place	85	96	50	39	270	2.84	Accept

Source: Survey, 2018

The above table shows mean of the response to means/ sources of getting information by Cassava Farmers. From the table the Cassava Farmers accepts that mean/sources through which they get information are; agricultural shows with mean score of 2.87, extension advisory service with mean score of 2.84, market place with mean score of 2.83. However, they rejected from broadcast, with mean score of 2.43, agricultural demonstration with mean score of 2.37 and seminars with mean score of 2.37. this implies that most of Cassava Farmers are illiterates as such they cannot read and write as well as understand English language thus, they do not recognized seminars and farm broadcast which are organized in English language as a means of getting information.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicated that Cassava Farmers needs information about improve species, insecticides/pesticides, weed control, storage/preservation facilities, farming equipment, credit facilities and post-harvest food technology. This finding corresponds with that of Opara (2009) who revealed that Cassava Farmers need

information on credit facilities, improved varieties, agro-chemicals, agro-machinery inputs and implements. Besides Ozowa (1995) revealed that Cassava Farmers need information on improved variety of inputs, modern farming implements, fertilizers, agro-chemical, weeding and harvesting.

The study also revealed that the sources of information available to Cassava Farmers are radio, traditional town Criers, agricultural extension workers, friends, relatives/neighbours and peer groups meeting. These findings is in consonance with that of Abraham (2009) who revealed that social functions, friends and Co-farmers are the sources and channels used to bring information to Cassava Famers obtain information through radio, television, neighbours, newspaper, poster, exhibition and extension agents.

The finding of the study also attested that information on fertilizer availability and application, information on new farming techniques, information on disease and pest control and information on supply of farm inputs are the types of information needed by Cassava Farmers to improve their yield. This is consistent with the finding of Adeola (2008) who found that Cassava Farmers need information to improve their yield, such information include; information on fertilizer availability and application, new farming technique, disease and pest control, agricultural support services, government regulation, supply of farm inputs and income generation.

Another finding of the study is that extension advisory services, extension publication, agricultural shows and market places are to get their information. This finding agreed with that of Ekoja (2002) who revealed that means/sources of getting information to Cassava Farmers are farm broadcast, extension advisory services, extension publication, agricultural demonstration, agricultural shows, seminars and market place.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR
FURTHER STUDIES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

5.2 SUMMARY

The study was designed to investigate the information needs of Cassava Farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State. The Study was designed specifically to investigate the information needs of Cassava Farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area, the sources of information available to them, the kinds of information Cassava Farmers need to improve their yield as well as the means/sources by which the Cassava Farmers used to get their information, and as such four (4) research question guided the study.

The study adopted a survey research designed, two hundred and eight four copies of the questionnaires were designed and distributed to Cassava Farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area personally by the researcher to collect the relevant data for the study. The questionnaire designed for the study undergoes face validations by the research supervisor before it was administered to the respondents. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis in answering the research questions. Specifically, the research questions were answered using means. The researcher used a four-point rating scale were by the level of acceptance of the criterion mean was 2.50 but below 2.50 it was not accepted.

The study revealed that Cassava Farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State needs information about improve species, insecticides/pesticides, weed control, storage/preservation facilities, farming equipment, credit facilities and post-harvest food technology.

Another finding of the study is that the sources of information available to Cassava Farmers are radio, Traditional Town-Criers, Agricultural Extension Workers, Friends, Relatives /Neighbours and peer group meetings.

The study also revealed that information on fertilizer availability and application, information on new farming techniques; information on disease and pest control and information on supply of farm inputs are the kinds of information needed by the Cassava Farmers to improve their yields.

The study attests that extension advisory services, extension publication, agricultural shows, and market places are means/sources by which Cassava Farmers use to get their information.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The study without doubts has led to the establishment of facts as regards the information needs of Cassava Farmers, it has shown that the majority of the Cassava Farmers are illiterates whose major means of livelihood is farming. It has equally shown that in the information age, when survival depends highly on information, the Cassava Farmers are not provided with adequate information as well as sources of information that can affect their productivity better. The importance of information as supportive inputs for high agricultural productivity is yet to be recognized by Cassava Farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State. The study therefore concludes that the information needs of Cassava Farmers are hardly met because those who are supposed to make these information available to them have not live up to expectation.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. The Local Government should equally organize adult education programme for the rural farmers as this will enhance their information utilization capacity.
2. The local government should be sending Agricultural Extension workers to educate the rural farmers on agricultural matters.
3. Community outreach programmes should equally be organized and used to disseminate information that would aid the socio-economic, political, agricultural and general enlightenment of the rural farmers.
4. The use of institutional and governmental organizations to ensure that farmers get to know and adopt agricultural innovations relevant to their situation should be encouraged. Example, the Agricultural Extension and Research liaison services (AERLS), the extension services of the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs)

etc. these bodies serve as facilitators of agricultural message by acting as communication departments. They should use media such as leaflets, newsletters, posters, exhibition, visuals aids and radio programmes in communicating agricultural information.

5. Organization of radio/television programmes on matters related to agriculture in local languages since majority of the farmers cannot understand the national language (English).
6. Organizing Extension Education. One of the ways of doing this is by training a group of models farmers with the hope that such farmers comes in contact with other farmers. This is particularly necessary because farmers outnumbered available extension workers.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. Factors affecting the information needs of farmers in rural communities of Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.
2. Information needs and information seeking behavior of rural dwellers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.
3. Methods of disseminating agricultural information to rural communities, problems and prospects.

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APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Department of Library Science and Information
Technology,
Gboko Polytechnic,
Makurdi Study Center
Date:

Dear Respondents,

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a final year student of the above named Department conducting a research on the Topic: “Information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State” as a fulfillment for the requirement of the award of the Higher National Diploma in Library Science and Information Technology.

Please, provide appropriate answer to the questionnaire attached. All information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Egbe Francis Ebute
Phone: 09063544557
Matric No. GPG/HND/LIS/016/016

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CASSAVA FARMERS

SECTION A: Information needs of cassava farmers

What are the information needs of cassava farmers in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State? Please tick [√] as appropriate.

Scale: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree, SA – Strongly Disagree

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Improve spacer				
2.	Insecticide/Pesticide				
3.	Weed Control				
4.	Marketing Strategy				
5.	Storage/preservation facility				
6.	Farming equipment				
7.	Weather condition				
8.	Technology innovation				
9.	Credit facility				
10.	Post harvest food technology 2				

SECTION B: The sources of information available to cassava farmers

What are the sources of information available to the cassava farmer in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State? Please tick [√] as appropriate

Scale: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree, SA – Strongly Disagree

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Newspaper magazines				
2.	Billboard/Poster				
3.	Public Libraries				
4.	Radio				
5.	Television				
6.	Tradition Town criers				
7.	Agricultural Extension Worker				
8.	Friends, relatives neighbors				
9.	Peer group meeting				
10.	Opinion/Political Leaders				

SECTION C: Kind of information needed to improve yield

What are the kind of information do a cassava farmer need to improve their cassava farm in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State? Please tick [√] as appropriate.

Scale: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree, SA – Strongly Disagree

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Information on new farming technique				
2.	Information on fertilizer availability				
3.	Information on disease and pest control				
4.	Information on agricultural support services				
5.	Information on Government regulation				
6.	Information on supply of farm inputs				
7.	Information on income generation				
8.	Others (specify)				

SECTION D: Means/sources of getting information

What are the means ways by which cassava farmer use to get their information in Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State? Please tick [√] as appropriate

Scale: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree, SA – Strongly Disagree

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Farm broadcast				
2.	Extension advisory service				
3.	Extension publication				
4.	Agricultural demonstration				
5.	Agricultural shows				
6.	Seminars organize				
7.	Market places				